

## Solutions to our Energy Problems

Written by Mike Honda  
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Rising gas prices have been a major point of concern for consumers and businesses in the past year. As supply shortages along with increased instability in major oil-producing regions of the world continue to drive up the cost of crude oil, we are confronted with the possibility that, given current consumption levels, high energy prices are here to stay.

As a member of the House Science Committee and the ranking member on the Energy Subcommittee, I have been working towards feasible long-term solutions to our energy needs through support for research into alternative energy sources. Two weeks ago, I convened a Science Committee hearing on renewable energy technologies at San Jose City Hall. Energy Subcommittee **Chairwoman Judy Biggert** (R-IL) and I heard testimony from a panel of Bay Area energy experts:

- **Dr. Steve Chu** , Director of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and a 1997 Nobel Laureate in Physics, spoke on new directions for research, including the [H](#)  
[ELIOS project](#)  
, which will examine technologies for converting solar energy into carbon-neutral energies for sustainable use;
- **Dr. Arno Penzias** , Venture Partner with new Enterprise Associates in Palo Alto and a [1](#)  
[978 Nobel Laureate in Physics](#)  
discussed investment opportunities in the renewable energy industry from the venture capital perspective;
- **Mr. Christian Larsen** , Vice President for Generation for the [Electric Power Research](#)  
[Institute](#) in Palo Alto, talked about the electric industry's view on renewable energy sources;
- **Mr. David Pearce** , President and CEO of Miasolé, presented on his company, which manufactures industrial-scale solar products using [thin film solar cell](#)  
[technology](#) that was originally developed in Department of Energy national laboratories; and
- **Mr. Ron Swenson** , co-founder of [ElectroRoof](#) , shared strategies for deploying solar energy technologies in the Third World, which includes many developing nations in need of environmentally-friendly technologies to supplement their industrial growth.

Solar and photovoltaic products are only one of many energy-related green technologies that are currently being developed by enterprising companies here in Silicon Valley. Other

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companies are engaging in research and development of fuel cells and nanotechnology, including innovations that can be used in automobiles, homes, businesses and everyday products. Last year, I secured a grant for the County of Santa Clara to install planar solid oxide fuel cells in select county buildings; an off-shoot of that technology could be used to power cars as a fuel replacement.

In the past year, I have also supported other environmentally-friendly energy legislation, including the Energy Efficient Buildings Act ( [H.R.5633](#) ), the Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle Act ( [H.R.5538](#) ), and the Bioenergy Innovation, Optional Fuel Utilization and Energy Legacy (BIOFUEL) Act ( [H.R.5372](#) ).

The solution to rising gas prices cannot be solved by just increasing oil industry regulations or expanding extraction of existing fossil fuel sources. Rather, it will require that we explore sustainable alternative energy sources that will supplement and/or replace current fossil fuels, while also providing benefits for the global environment.

You can learn more about these issues by viewing the webcast of the field hearing at [http://sanjose.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish\\_id=63](http://sanjose.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=63) . (Best viewed through Internet Explorer)